

CIA Knew Tongsun Park as

By Maxine Cheshire
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The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had reason to know as long ago as the early 1960s that Tongsun Park, a central figure in investigations of South Korea influence-buying on Capitol Hill, had ties with the Korean CIA.

An American CIA station chief in Seoul who met him frequently said he regards Park as an important "agent of influence."

In addition to Park's official Korean role, he had at least circumstantial ties with the American CIA through his prominent membership in two student groups.

Justice Department and congressional investigators, as part of their inquiries into the Korean lobbying effort, have been trying to determine what the American CIA knew about the campaign and what it told law enforcement authorities about it.

A Washington Post investigation, based on private and official papers and interviews, provides new documentation of the scope of Park's connections to the Korean government and its CIA.

This contrasts with the South Korean government's consistent claim that Park has never had an official connection. Park himself said last week in Seoul that his activities in the United States, which included entertaining and making "campaign contributions" to members of Congress, were done solely as a private businessman.

The Post findings show that:

- In 1960 Park was the chairman of a Korean government-sanctioned student group in Seoul that received a grant from the Asia Foundation, at the time a money conduit of the American CIA.

- In 1962 Park helped with preparations and participated in the visit to the United States by the founder and first director of the Korean CIA. The visit was coordinated by the American CIA.

- In 1964 Park became an

incorporator, director and president of an international anti-Communist youth organization based in Washington, which had circumstantial links to the American CIA.

- From at least 1969 to 1973 Park was in contact with the American CIA station chief in Seoul, with whom he maintained a highly visible party-going social friendship that was regarded as enhancing Park's prestige with his own government. This relationship, by some accounts, survived a direct order by U.S. Ambassador Philip C. Habib to his staff to end all contact with Park.

- In 1969 Park was receiving cabled instructions from a senior official on President Park Chung Hee's staff — instructions which, at least once, were coordinated with the head of the Korean CIA, Lee Hu Rak.

It is not clear what the formal or legal responsibilities are for the intelligence agencies to share such information with other segments of government, executive and legislative.

Many highly placed persons in both branches who accepted Park's lavish hospitality and/or campaign

contributions have told federal investigators that no one ever alerted them to the fact that Park was anything other than a gregarious, ambitious rice merchant with Perle Mesta aspirations.

Some accepted contributions would have been legal coming from a resident alien businessman but would be illegal coming from the agent of a foreign government.

In an interview with the Washington Post last week, the new director of the CIA, Admiral Stansfield Turner, declined either to confirm or to deny that "anybody in the CIA knew Park to be an agent or influence."

The only comment he would make, he said, was that "I have been assured that all of the relevant information the CIA had on Park or KCIA activities was passed to appropriate authorities in the executive branch of our government."

The CIA has been "fully cooperative" with investigators seeking information, Turner said, although some data might have been withheld at various times because "people's lives were at stake." It is "part of our ethic not to disclose sources," he said.

Korean Agent

partment first began its inquiry into Park's activities, an FBI agent who asked to see any files the CIA might have on Park was given little more than a folder of old newspaper clippings from society page coverage of his parties.

Earlier, in 1971, the State Department's Korea desk officer, Don Ranard, asked for a CIA briefing on Park and all that was known about him. Ranard made the request because FBI agents had come to him in their investigations of Park's friend, former Representative Cornelius Gallagher (Dem-N.J.).

"The CIA didn't seem to have much on him" Ranard recalled, "where he went to school, the fact that he had once been arrested on some kind of minor thing — a traffic accident or something."

It was John (Jocko) Richardson, the American CIA station chief in Seoul, who identified Park as an "agent of influence."

"That's our jargon for something the British started in World War II," Richardson said in a telephone call from his retirement home in Mexico. "We had a feeling he was not just an ROK (Republic of Korea) CIA agent, but reported higher to someone in the government."

The identity of the person of whom Park reported "remained a mystery" to him, Richardson said.

Copies of cables in the possession of the Washington Post indicate that Tongsun Park, at least during one period in 1969, was getting some operating instructions from Dr. Dong Shik Shen, economic secretary to President Park Chung Hee.

A source close to Tongsun Park used the word "debriefing" to describe the regular sessions Park had each time he visited Seoul during that time. Richardson said he preferred to "say just that I had a friendly conversation with him frequently from time to time."

Richardson said he entertained Park at parties in his home and went, in turn, to parties Park gave for visiting American dignitaries.

Turner said he did not know if the CIA had any legal or formal responsibilities to pass along information on Park, but added: "I would think it's common sense."

Turner did not deny that American CIA agents "knew Tongsun Park on a social basis." But he had been assured, he said, "that there is no connection between Tongsun Park and the CIA of the United States . . . no official connection, not a working relationship."

Turner did not say precisely when the CIA had passed along information on Park or to whom. An aide, asked to check the records, reported the next day that "there is no real definite date when information was passed, because it was being passed continuously whenever we became aware of it."

He added: "It was passed in a variety of ways and this was done several times when it was requested."

According to some accounts, in the past, CIA officials at Langley, Va., headquarters have produced only sketchy biographical data on Park when queried by other government agencies.

In 1975, when the Justice De-

One party Richardson recalled attending was given by Park for Representative Richard Hanna (Dem-Calif.). Another was in honor of Representative Gallagher. Both men are now prime targets in the investigations by both the Justice Department and House Standards of Official Conduct Committee.

Richardson conceded that his presence at these affairs was obviously helpful to Park in impressing Korean officials.

Asked what he got of the relationship or how the CIA benefited, Richardson replied: "That's a good question."

Park has a close American friend in Washington who served both as an agent of the FBI and later as a CIA "agent of influence" in Latin America.

"I had tea with Tongsun in London two months ago," the friend told the Washington Post last week. "He is bewildered by what has happened. He said to me: 'What did I ever do except try to help my country exactly the same way you helped your country when you worked for the CIA? I could understand if the American public suddenly found out I was spying for the Russians, why they would be upset. But Korea is an ally.'"